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The Mercer's Hospital Music Collection an overview

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THE MERCER'S HOSPITAL MUSIC COLLECTION: AN OVERVIEW

Triona O'Hanlon

This article provides an overview of the Mercer's Hospital Music Collection and its contents, and is based on a paper presented at the IAML Conference in July 2011. Mercer's Hospital was founded in 1734 in order to provide medical care for the poor and destitute. It was located on Stephen Street in Dublin's city centre. Mary Mercer who had a house on Great Ship Street, Dublin, donated the building, which originally served as an alms-house for the reception of poor girls. Mary Mercer died on 4 March 1735 and was buried at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin. The hospital was not specified among her endowments.¹ Its management was the responsibility of a board of governors and trustees, which included hospital surgeons and physicians together with several distinguished, wealthy, non-medical members of Dublin society, including archbishops, bishops, lords and barons.²

Between 1718 and 1753 six other charity hospitals were established in Dublin city.³ All sourced funding from musical events; the best documented of these are the benefit concerts held at the Rotunda (for Dr Mosse's Lying-In Hospital).⁴ Even though Mercer's Hospital was the third voluntary hospital to open, it was the first to initiate a series of annual and bi-annual benefit concerts, the first of which took place on 8 April 1736 in St Andrew's Round Church, Suffolk Street. St Andrew's would remain the principal venue for the benefit concerts for the next 44 years. It was known as the 'Round' Church due to its elliptical shape.

¹ Lyons, J.B.: *The Quality of Mercer's: The story of Mercer's Hospital 1734–1991*, Dublin: Glendale, 1991, pp. 17, 19–21; Townsend, Horatio: *The history of Mercer's charitable hospital*, Dublin: Herbert, 1860, pp. 17–19; *Dublin Gazette* 8 Mar. 1735; *IRL–Dna* Ref. 999-836-2 'Probate of Mrs Mercer's Will of 8th August 1733, Death 4th March, 1735'.

² Mercer's Hospital Minute Books (MHMB) 1736–72, see introductory page – List of the Governors of Mercer's Hospital and pp. 209–210. The hospital's administrative records are housed at the National Archives, Bishop Street, Dublin; see *IRL–Dna* Ref. 2006/97.

³ The Charitable Infirmary was founded in 1718, Dr Steevens' Hospital in 1733, The Hospital for the Incurables in 1743, the Rotunda Hospital in 1745, The Meath Hospital in 1753 and St Nicholas' Hospital in 1753.

⁴ Boydell, Brian: *Rotunda Music in Eighteenth-Century Dublin*, Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1992. For the purposes of this article, eighteenth-century fundraising events which included musical performance are referred to as benefit concerts.

As the first Dublin hospital to benefit from the performance of musical works, Mercer's had a pioneering role in promoting charitable music performance in the city. The success experienced by Mercer's was a catalyst for the establishment of benefit concerts in support of other Dublin hospitals and Mercer's proved its durability, continuing for approximately two-thirds of the eighteenth century (1736–80) while competing with six other hospitals. Mercer's pioneering role in terms of musical promotion is further emphasised when compared with the two other main examples of eighteenth-century art music in Dublin, i.e. theatre music and music performed within a liturgical context. The purpose of introducing music into theatres was to provide entertainment. Music performed in a liturgical context contributed towards the solemnity experienced in cathedral and church worship. The main purpose of musical performance within the context of the Mercer's Hospital benefit concerts was to raise money and this is the earliest Irish example of charity concert promotion. Benefit concerts were not the principal source of income for the hospital; amounts received from benefactions, rents and legacies often exceeded profits accrued from the benefit concerts. However, the concerts were a significant source of regular income contributing greatly towards the hospital's development, allowing it to expand its capacity for beds and patients, permitting the hospital to cater more effectively for Dublin's sick poor.

Mercer's Hospital benefit concerts consisted of a church service, which included a charity sermon and the performance of sacred musical works. Sermons were preached by some of the country's most eminent bishops including the bishops of Kildare, Ferns, Derry and Ossory, and works by Handel dominated the musical programme from the earliest years. The format and content of the Mercer's benefit concerts suggest that they were closely modelled on charity performances which took place in St Paul's Cathedral, London, in support of the Sons of the Clergy.

The Mercer's Hospital Music Collection provides primary evidence for the type of repertoire performed at the hospital's eighteenth-century benefit concerts. The collection includes manuscript sources for George Frideric Handel's 'Utrecht' *Te Deum-Jubilate* HWV 278–9, his four coronation anthems HWV 258–61 and two Chapel Royal anthems, HWV 250b and 256b. Manuscript sources for an orchestral anthem

composed by William Boyce, which was specially commissioned for the charity, also survive in the collection. The contents of the collection are significant in terms of source studies, containing fifty-seven vocal and instrumental part-books in both manuscript and printed form. The absence of orchestral scores and organ scores for all works is remarkable. However, it is clear that scores existed during the eighteenth century, as evidenced by entries in the hospital minutes.⁵

The music collection was kept in storage at the hospital until 1981 when it was deposited at Trinity College Dublin by the Board of Mercer's Hospital. It is currently housed at the Manuscripts and Archives Research Library at Trinity College. The collection may be divided into three categories:

1. The core repertoire, *IRL–Dmh* Mss 1–44, comprises vocal and instrumental manuscript sources for works by Handel, Boyce, Greene, Purcell and Humfrey. The works in these manuscripts were most frequently performed at the hospital's annual and bi-annual benefit concerts. The largest number of surviving parts in the collection is contained within this category. See Figure 1.
2. *IRL–Dmh* Mss 45–50 contain manuscript sources for Handel's Overture to *Esther* HWV 50 and Corelli's *Concerto Grosso* No. 8 in G minor, Op. 6. The works contained in this category appear to have been used less frequently and fewer parts survive here than in the core repertoire. See Figure 1.
3. *IRL–Dmh* Mss 51–57 include seven volumes of printed instrumental parts for a selection of concerti, sonatas and overtures by Avison, Barsanti, Festing, Handel and Stanley. All printed works were published before 1743. See Figure 2.

⁵ MHMB 1736–72 pp. 191, 285; MHMB 1738–50, p. 162; MHMB 1750–68 p. 149.

Fig. 1

**IRL–Dmh Mss 1–50
The Mercer’s Hospital Manuscript Collection⁶**

Composer	Title of work	Date of composition
Pelham Humfrey (1647–74)	Chant in C [<i>Gloria</i> attributed to Humfrey?]	Unknown
Henry Purcell (1659–95)	<i>Te Deum-Jubilate</i> in D Z.232	1694
Arcangelo Corelli (1653–95)	<i>Concerto Grosso</i> No. 8 in G minor, Op. 6	1708?
George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)	‘Utrecht’ <i>Te Deum- Jubilate</i> HWV 278–9	1713
George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)	Overture to <i>Esther</i> HWV 50	1718, rev. 1732–36
George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)	<i>I will magnify thee</i> HWV 250b	1724?
George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)	<i>Let God arise</i> HWV 256b	1726?
George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)	<i>Zadok the priest</i> HWV 258	1727
George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)	<i>Let thy hand be strengthened</i> HWV 259	1727
George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)	<i>The King shall rejoice</i> HWV 260	1727
George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)	<i>My heart is inditing</i> HWV 261	1727
Maurice Greene (1696–1755)	<i>Sing we merrily unto God our strength</i>	1740
William Boyce (1711–79)	<i>Blessed is he that considereth the sick</i>	1741

⁶ The information recorded in this table is listed in chronological order according to the date of composition for each work. This table lists the contents of the Mercer’s Hospital Music Manuscript Collection IRL–Dmh Mss 1–50.

Fig. 2

***IRL–Dmh* Mss 51–57
The Mercer’s Hospital Printed Music Collection⁷**

Composer	Title of work	Date of publication
George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)	<i>Twelve Grand Concerti in Seven Parts</i> [HWV 319–330 Op. 6]	1739, Walsh London
George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)	<i>XXIV Overtures for Violins & c. in Eight Parts</i>	1740, Walsh London
Charles Avison (1709–70)	<i>Six Concerti in Seven Parts</i>	1740, Joseph Barber Newcastle & London
Francesco Barsanti (1690–1772)	<i>Concerti Grossi</i> Op. 3	1742, Edinburgh
Michael Christian Festing (1705–52)	<i>Six Sonatas for Two Violins and Bass</i> Op. 6	1742, William Smith London
John Stanley (1712–86)	<i>Six Concerti in Seven Parts</i> Op. 2	1742, London

The Mercer’s manuscript sources afford an insight into eighteenth-century Dublin performance practice issues, and examination of the collection’s provenance reveals how they relate to extant Irish and British manuscript collections. The table at Figure 1 lists the contents of *IRL–Dmh* Mss1–50. Gaps in the core repertoire (*IRL–Dmh* Mss1–44) can be identified through the lack of surviving parts for trumpets and missing parts and movements for Handel’s coronation anthem *The King shall rejoice* HWV 260. Each manuscript number represents one volume of parts, and each volume is essentially a part-book of up to ten works, e.g. *IRL–Dmh* Ms 23 is a violin I part-book. The contents of *IRL–Dmh* Mss 45–50 differs; each volume contains parts for only two works, Corelli’s concerto and the overture to Handel’s *Esther* HWV 50. Given the longevity of the Mercer’s benefit concerts and the age of the collection it is likely that some parts were lost or perhaps were destroyed at some stage. The misrepresentation of parts within certain manuscript part-books, i.e. the absence and duplication of parts for some works, suggests that the music contained in *IRL–Dmh* Mss 1–44 was not bound until after the parts had been withdrawn from use. Consequently, describing the Mercer’s manuscript volumes as part-books in the traditional sense is inaccurate due to the order

in which the material has been bound. The way in which the parts are bound suggests that this would not have been done until the governors of Mercer's were reasonably sure that the music would not be used in performance again.

The surviving printed music provides evidence for the transmission of instrumental music by popular European composers to Dublin. The table at Figure 2 lists the works contained in the Mercer's printed collection (*IRL–Dmh* Mss 51–7). Only two of the printed works contain a complete set of surviving parts; Festing's *Six Sonatas* and one volume of Stanley's *Six Concerti*. Other printed works contain duplicate parts.

The Mercer's Manuscript Sources *IRL–Dmh* Mss 1–50

Examination of the contents of *IRL–Dmh* Mss 1–50 reveals that the musical works performed at the hospital's annual and bi-annual benefit concerts were significantly adapted, presumably to accommodate performing forces available in eighteenth-century Dublin. Identified adaptations, which include the substitution of vocal parts by instrumentalists, of alto parts by tenors, of solo parts by chorus and of chorus parts by soloists, the employment of a reduced scoring and the performance of abridged versions of works, are all indicative of the constraints experienced in eighteenth-century Dublin performance practice, particularly in relation to the performance of service settings and orchestral anthems. However, the adaptations, which greatly affected the arrangement of the music performed, demonstrate how the availability or otherwise of performers did not lead to any major change in Mercer's repertoire over a forty-four year period. It would have been necessary to give careful consideration to the types of adaptations made in order to preserve the overall effect of the music performed, and considerable musical knowledge would also have been required from Mercer's benefit concert organisers, copyists and conductors to ensure a satisfactory performance.

Mercer's parts were occasionally borrowed by other Dublin institutions including Christ Church Cathedral, the Musical Academy (a musical society) and the Meath Hospital. The use of the Mercer's parts by such organisations demonstrates that these adaptations were also employed for non-Mercer's performances of works contained in the

⁷ The information recorded in this table is listed in chronological order according to the date of

collection's core repertoire. Therefore performance-related problems encountered at the Mercer's Hospital benefit concerts are representative of the type of performance practice issues encountered in eighteenth-century Dublin. Parts were adapted by the attachment of extra staves of music to some folios, the pasting-in of staves of music to other folios, the removal of parts (i.e. some part-folios have been cut out) and the omission of parts which were not copied at all. Some adaptations were included at the time of copying, showing no evidence of pasted-in material.

For the purposes of this article I will provide a summary of the types of adaptations identified in the surviving Mercer's parts for Handel's 'Utrecht' *Te Deum-Jubilate* HWV 278–9 and the significance of these sources within the context of the collection. The identification of adaptations made to approximately 30% of the surviving Mercer's parts for Handel's 'Utrecht' music reveals that this is the most altered work in the collection. This is not surprising, however, given the probability that Handel's 'Utrecht' music continued to be included as part of the Mercer's repertoire for at least a thirty-five year period (1736–71).⁸

The first Dublin performance of Handel's 'Utrecht' music most probably took place at the inaugural Mercer's benefit concert (1736).⁹ The work continued to be performed up to 1745 at least.¹⁰ Handel's 'Dettingen' *Te Deum* HWV 283, composed in 1743, was performed at the February 1745 benefit concert and again at the February 1762 benefit concert.¹¹ Although performances of a *Te Deum-Jubilate* are documented in the surviving newspapers from 1745 to 1771, they do not specify whether the 'Dettingen' or 'Utrecht' music continued to be performed from 1745 onwards. Deutsch's research suggests that the 'Dettingen' *Te Deum* and 'Utrecht' *Jubilate* were performed at the

publication for each work.

⁸ In documenting the occurrence of the Mercer's Hospital benefit concerts a terminal date of 1780 was fixed for the following reason: the absence of hospital administrative records for the period 1772 to 1786 makes it difficult to determine if benefit concerts occurred during that fourteen-year period. The final benefit concert recorded in the hospital minute books took place on Thursday 12 December 1771. However, Townsend's reference to a surviving word-book, printed in 1780 for a Mercer's performance of *Messiah*, suggests that the benefit concerts continued until 1780 at least. See Townsend, Horatio: *Handel's visit to Dublin*, Dublin: McGlashan, 1852, p. 83.

⁹ Boydell, Brian: *A Dublin Musical Calendar 1700–1760*, Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1988, p. 15.

¹⁰ MHMB 1736–72, pp. 44, 48, 89, 112; MHMB 1738–50, pp. 5, 28, 49, 75.

February 1745 Mercer's benefit concert. The author of this article concludes that despite the introduction of the 'Dettingen' *Te Deum* to the repertoire in 1745, it is likely that the 'Utrecht' *Te Deum–Jubilate* HWV 278–9 and not the 'Dettingen' continued to be performed at the majority of Mercer's benefit concerts, as no parts for the latter are present in the collection. The names of several cathedral singers and performers who were active in Dublin from the mid-1740s onwards are written on various Mercer's 'Utrecht' parts. The presence of these names and the significant adaptations made to surviving parts further supports this theory.

Adaptations made to the Mercer's 'Utrecht' music result in the inconsistent representation of parts within several surviving vocal parts. For example the alto parts bound in *IRL–Dmh* Ms 8 and Ms 11 includes alto I solo, alto II solo, alto chorus and alto II chorus music for various movements. This implies that performers who used these parts sang the different alto parts as required and perhaps the same singers sang both the solo and chorus parts.¹² The extensive adaptation of the surviving Mercer's flute and oboe parts (*IRL–Dmh* Mss 40, 41 and 42) indicates that Mercer's instrumentalists substituted or supplemented several treble passages in the 'Utrecht' music. The adaptation of the Mercer's flute part results in the instrument doubling the treble line, or the treble I line where scored. Adaptations made to the oboe parts result in the inclusion of the instrument in movements where oboe was not originally scored, and the omission of some music originally scored for oboe. Some additions may have served as cues; however, the inclusion of dynamics in other examples suggests performance of this music by Mercer's oboists. It may have been decided that a wind player would add support to the treble line, particularly to solo sections and on occasions when an inadequate number of chorus singers was available. As boy trebles were most probably engaged to sing the treble parts, the additional support from flute and, or, oboes would certainly provide support to less experienced younger singers.

¹¹ MHMB 1736–72, p. 132; MHMB 1738–50, p. 97; Boydell: *Calendar*, p. 102; Deutsch, Otto Erich: *Handel: A Documentary Biography*, London: A. and C. Black, 1955, pp. 598, 607. Townsend: *Mercer's*, p. 50.

Mercer's Copyists

The classification of Mercer's copyists posed a number of problems, as some handwriting samples were very similar, making it difficult to differentiate between the use of certain shapes and flourishes. The work of a possible thirty-seven copyists has been identified in the Mercer's Manuscript Collection, which was copied between 1736 and 1771. Apart from John Mason, Mercer's copyists are not from the same pool of copyists found in the Christ Church and St Patrick's Cathedral Collections.¹³ It can therefore be concluded that a second network of non-cathedral based Dublin copyists was active during the eighteenth century. John Mason was a bass singer and vicar choral at St Patrick's Cathedral from 1729 to 1783 and was also a member of the Christ Church Cathedral choir from 1732 to 1784. He was a soloist at the *Messiah* première and was listed among the principal voices for the inaugural Mercer's Hospital benefit concert, as reported in *Pue's Occurrences*:

"On Thursday last was Preached a Charity Sermon at St. Andrews, by the Revd. Dean Maddin, for the Benefit of Mercer's Hospital; at the Same Time was perform'd, A Grand Te Deum Jubilate, and an Anthem Compos'd by the famous Mr. Handel, Mr Dubourg Play'd the first Violin, Signor Pasquelini, the first Bass.

The principal Voices were, Mr. Church, Mr. Lamb, Mr. Bails, and Mr. Mason.

The Performers were upwards of 70 in Number, among whom were several Noblemen and Gentlemen of Distinction, besides the best publick Hands in this Kingdom; twas the grandest Performance ever heard here, the whole was conducted with the utmost Regularity and Decency.

*There were Present, Their Graces the Duke and Duchess of Dorset, and Lady Caroline, attended by a vast Number of Nobility and Gentry of the first Rank."*¹⁴

Mason's work can be identified in seventeen surviving Mercer's parts for Maurice Greene's anthem *Sing we merrily unto God our strength*. Apart from an adaptation possibly made by Mason to a violin I part for the 'Utrecht' music, bound in *IRL-Dmh* Ms 24 (vn I), his work as a Mercer's copyist is exclusive to Greene's anthem.

¹² *IRL-Dmh* Mss 8 and 11 are both alto part-books.

¹³ Sue Hemmens kindly assisted in examining samples of handwriting from the Mercer's Collection and assisted in establishing information regarding Mercer's copyists. See also Houston, Kerry: 'The Eighteenth-Century Music Manuscripts at St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin: Sources, Lineage and Relationship to other Collections', Unpublished PhD thesis, Trinity College Dublin, Vol. 3 (Hands and watermarks found in the manuscripts in St Patrick's Cathedral), pp. 39–84.

¹⁴ *Pue's Occurrences* 6–10 Apr. 1736. Boydell: *Calendar*, pp. 61, 284; Lawlor, H.J.: *The Fasti of St Patrick's, Dublin*, Dundalk: W. Tempest, 1930, pp. 225, 232, 245n, 246 (2), 247.

Two copyists are named in the hospital's administrative records, a Mr Cross and a Mr Kelly.¹⁵ It has not been possible to identify which handwriting samples represent their work. It is possible that Mercer's sources dating from c.1755 include a sample of Cross's work. A cellist and horn player by the name of Thomas Kelly was a member of the City Band in 1753 and played horn at the opening of the new Rotunda Hospital in December 1757.¹⁶ He participated at several benefit concerts that took place at Marlborough Green with violinist and conductor Samuel Lee.¹⁷ Thomas Kelly may be the same 'Mr Kelly' who copied parts for the Mercer's 1759 performance of *Acis and Galatea* HWV 49. This unique Mercer's performance of the work took place on 6 February 1759 at Fishamble Street Theatre. *Acis and Galatea* was regularly performed in eighteenth-century Dublin and its apparent popularity may have inspired the governors of Mercer's Hospital to depart from the usual benefit concert format and the pieces that were customary. No parts for this work survive in the Mercer's Collection.

The manuscript collection consists of forty-four sets of parts for thirteen works. Surviving parts were grouped into sets according to copyist and paper type. The Mercer's sets illustrate a number of copying trends and provide an interesting comparison with the copying practices evident at both Dublin cathedrals and for the Rotunda Hospital benefit concerts. The identification of a number of Mercer's sets which date from the same period reveals the likelihood of co-copying, i.e. more than one copyist was engaged in copying parts for a work at the same time; on average the work of six copyists can be identified for all works contained in *IRL-Dmh* Mss 1–44, and none of the principal works surviving in the core repertoire result from the work of a sole copyist. It is likely that each identified set represents only a fragment of the original collection and the presence of a number of sets for the same work indicates the re-copying of works and possible re-introduction of works to the repertoire. The work of certain copyists is specific to particular works and, or, particular types of work.

¹⁵ MHMB 1736–72, pp. 251, 280; MHMB 1750–68, pp. 75, 141.

¹⁶ The Rotunda (Dr. Mosse's Lying-in Hospital) first opened in George's Lane in 1745; it later relocated to Great Britain Street where the opening in 1757 was marked by a concert at which Kelly performed.

¹⁷ Boydell: *Calendar*, pp. 140, 152, 166, 182, 195, 199, 282–3. The benefit concerts put on by Kelly and Lee were not hospital benefit concerts but were benefit concerts which provided musicians with a source of income.

Provenance of the Collection

The Mercer's Collection serves as an important archival resource when considering the transmission of music to eighteenth-century Dublin. The first Dublin performance of Handel's sacred works most probably took place at the hospital's inaugural benefit concert.¹⁸ The hospital and its governors may therefore be credited with acquiring the first eighteenth-century Dublin sources for Handel's 'Utrecht' *Te Deum-Jubilate* HWV 278–9 and the coronation anthem *The King shall rejoice* HWV 260, thus introducing these works to the Dublin repertoire. From the evidence of three major copying errors, it is highly probable that the earliest Mercer's sources for the 'Utrecht' *Te Deum-Jubilate* HWV 278–9 were copied from John Walsh's printed edition.¹⁹ Extensive adaptations affect the original contents of some Mercer's 'Utrecht' parts and suggest the possibility that Walsh's edition was used as a guide or template from which the benefit concert organisers adapted and modified the music, identifying their needs regarding instrumentation and vocal scoring.

The earliest Mercer's sources for the coronation and Chapel Royal anthems seem to derive from early manuscript copies. The absence of surviving Mercer's manuscript scores is very significant in this respect; indeed, none of the surviving Mercer's sets is complete, i.e. not a single set contains all parts for each work contained in the core repertoire. Consequently, the loss of parts has been considered; it is probable that the source from which the Handel anthems were copied no longer survives.

The provenance of the non-Handelian anthems is very interesting. The sources for Maurice Greene's orchestral anthem *Sing we merrily unto God our strength* and William Boyce's orchestral anthem *Blessed is he that considereth the sick* demonstrate significant links to sources extant in Irish and British collections. Greene's anthem was

¹⁸ Boydell: *Calendar*, p. 15.

¹⁹ John Walsh Junior (1709–66) published the 'Utrecht' music between 1731 and 1732. Walsh's printed edition provided an alternative source for copyists; however, it contains three major errors; an incorrect reading on the first and last notes in bar 2 of the trumpet II part in No. 7 from the *Te Deum*, and the wrong final chord to the *Te Deum*. The final chord in question is that of G major, the key of the final movement of the *Te Deum* being D major. It is difficult to ascertain precisely when Walsh's edition became available in Dublin.

composed in 1740 and is the earlier of the two non-Handel anthems contained in the Mercer's Collection. The Mercer's sources bear the incorrect title *Sing ye merrily* and no surviving records document performance of the anthem at the hospital's benefit concerts. The absence of extensive adaptations such as those identified in the Mercer's 'Utrecht' parts suggests that Greene's anthem may have been performed less frequently at the benefit concerts than the Handel works. Greene's anthem was composed for performance at the Festival of the Sons of the Clergy. It is probable, due to the similarities between both events, that its introduction to the Mercer's repertoire resulted from its performance in London.

When the Mercer's sources were compared with extant sources present in collections housed at the Bodleian Library, Oxford and the British Library, London, it became evident that *Sing we merrily* was revised. Two surviving manuscript score copies include an alternative setting of No.4 *Lord, thou hast been our refuge*; GB–Ob Ms Mus.D.42 and GB–Lbl Add. 31694. The Mercer's sources (IRL–Dmh Mss 2–44) appear to be the earliest surviving copies of the anthem pre-revision, apart from the autograph (GB–Ob Ms Mus.D.49) and are the only surviving Irish sources for *Sing we merrily*. The only known Irish performances of Greene's anthem took place at the Mercer's Hospital benefit concerts. A large number of variant readings can be identified between the Mercer's sources and the autograph, which suggests that the Mercer's parts were not copied directly from the autograph; there may be a missing intermediate source. As the Mercer's sources contain the same setting of the anthem as that in the autograph it can be concluded that this setting, composed for performance at the Festival of the Sons of the Clergy, was also performed in Dublin. Various revisions made to the anthem highlight the different settings performed at venues in both Britain and Ireland.

William Boyce's orchestral anthem *Blessed is he that considereth the sick* was specially commissioned for Mercer's Hospital. Boyce chose the text from Psalm 41 in the Book

of Common Prayer. He aptly altered the text from *Blessed is he that considereth the poor* to *Blessed is he that considereth the sick*.²⁰ The anthem was composed in 1741 and received its first performance at the benefit concert of 10 December of that year. The initial request for Boyce's commission has not been recorded in the hospital minutes and Boyce did not attend the work's première. However, Handel was in attendance on this occasion, following an invitation from the hospital's governors.²¹ It was suggested that Handel might accompany Boyce's anthem on the organ but it seems more likely that Handel accompanied his own music only.

A second performance of Boyce's anthem took place on 12 December 1745.²² It is likely that Boyce's anthem received several performances in aid of the hospital even though its title was not recorded in any other surviving newspaper advertisements or accounts. The re-copying of the work in 1757, detailed in the hospital minutes, suggests that the anthem remained in the Mercer's repertoire for at least a sixteen-year period.²³ As the anthem was written specifically for the hospital, it would be surprising if it received only two performances over the lifetime of the benefit concerts.

Mercer's sources for *Blessed is he that considereth the sick* appear to represent the earliest surviving copies of the work before its revision for London and other British performances. It seems likely, considering the work was commissioned for the hospital, that the surviving Dublin sources derive from the autograph, which no longer survives. Records indicate that the Mercer's parts were sent to Dublin from England.²⁴ It is not clear if Boyce sent over a score, from which a local copyist(s) copied the Mercer's parts, or if a score and parts were sent over. None of the surviving Mercer's parts are in Boyce's own hand and a score copy of the anthem does not survive in the Mercer's Collection.

²⁰ The text reverted to its original form for performances in support of other charities. Bartlett, Ian and Bruce, Robert J.: *William Boyce a Tercentenary Sourcebook and Compendium*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010, p. 27.

²¹ Handel arrived in Dublin in November 1741. MHMB 1736–72, p. 98; MHMB 1738–50, p. 60.

²² *Dublin Courant* 15–19 Oct. 1745; *Dublin Journal* 10–14 Dec. 1745; Boydell: *Calendar*, p. 104.

²³ MHMB 1736–72, p. 267; MHMB 1750–68, p. 113; Bartlett and Bruce: *Boyce Tercentenary*, pp. 26–27.

A complete score-book of *Blessed is he*, present in the Christ Church, Dublin music collection (*IRL–Drcb* C6.1.24.1.6), reveals that the anthem was also performed in the cathedral, thus performances of *Blessed is he* were not unique to Mercer’s. The Christ Church score was re-bound during the nineteenth century and contains the same setting of the anthem as that identified in the Mercer’s parts.²⁵ The Christ Church score is the work of a non-Mercer’s copyist. Of major significance is the presence of two cuts in No.4, evident in both the Mercer’s and Christ Church sources. Detailed comparison of both Dublin sources (*IRL–Dmh* Mss 2–44 and *IRL–Drcb* C6.1.24.1.6) with sources extant in Britain (*GB–Lcm* Ms 783, *GB–Ob* Ms Mus.D.23, *GB–Lbl* Add. 28967 and *GB–H* 30.B.6) reveals that the Dublin version was not performed elsewhere in the British Isles. The Mercer’s setting of the anthem may have been an early draft for later English performances. Subsequent to the Mercer’s première the anthem was performed at the Three Choirs Festival in 1743 and 1752 and a further six times between 1792 and 1799. It is also likely that the anthem was performed at the Festival of the Sons of the Clergy.²⁶

IRL–Dmh Mss 45–50

The division of the music for the overture to *Esther* and Corelli’s *Concerto Grosso* No. 8 into separate manuscript volumes distinguishes the contents of *IRL–Dmh* Mss 45–50 from the contents of *IRL–Dmh* Mss 1–44. The absence of vocal music from *IRL–Dmh* Mss 45–50 is in marked contrast with the contents of *IRL–Dmh* Mss 1–44, which are comprised of sacred choral works, including seven orchestral anthems and a service setting. The works contained in *IRL–Dmh* Mss 45–50 appear to have been used less frequently than the music in the core repertoire. The records show only two performances of Corelli’s concerto, together with the usual works by Handel (*Te Deum–Jubilate* and an anthem): at the benefit concert on 7 December 1749 and the concert of

²⁴ Burrows, Donald and Dunhill, Rosemary: *Music and Theatre in Handel’s World: The Family Papers of James Harris 1732–1780*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 131. Letter dated 10 December 1741 4th Earl of Shaftsbury London to James Harris [Salisbury] Hants Record Office 9M73/G350/22/1.

²⁵ A note written on the first page of *IRL–Drcb* C6.1.24.1.6 suggests that the anthem was incorrectly attributed to Handel at one stage: ‘This anthem is composed by W.^m Boyce not Handel. See “Boyce’s own” vol. IV p. 42 and Editorial note therein. J.F. Fitzgerald 1906.’ The name G. F. Handel is crossed out from the top right hand corner of the first page. *Blessed is he that considereth the sick* is not included in Boyce’s *Cathedral Music*.

29 November 1750.²⁷ The inclusion of Corelli's concerto represents a distinct variation in Mercer's programming. It is difficult to establish at what point in the cathedral service a concerto would have been performed, unless it was played as an interlude or perhaps a recessional piece. If performers needed to re-organise, the placing of the concerto at the end of the service would cause the least amount of disruption. There is no record of the overture to *Esther* ever having been performed at a Mercer's Hospital benefit concert, nevertheless it seems likely that the overture and Corelli's concerto were performed at the same benefit concert(s) as both works are copied on conjoined folio and the parts appear to date from the late 1740s to the 1750s. The overture was regularly played as a prelude at the Festival of the Sons of the Clergy,²⁸ and would have aptly served as a prelude to the Mercer's benefit concerts (cathedral service), signifying commencement of the proceedings. The work of two copyists, and a paper type not identifiable elsewhere in the collection, are evident in these manuscript parts. Consequently, it may be surmised that the surviving parts for both works may not have belonged to the hospital originally and may have been borrowed from another organisation, probably the Philharmonic Society, whose repertoire included Handel oratorios and popular eighteenth-century instrumental works. The Philharmonic Society met in Fishamble Street, Dublin, at their premises opposite St John's Church. They gave weekly performances between 1742 and 1752.²⁹ The relationship between Mercer's and the Philharmonic Society was close; players were drafted in from the society to participate at the hospital's benefit concerts and the hospital also benefited from performances given by the society. The music performed at the society's concerts may have been stored with the music performed at Mercer's benefit concerts, resulting in the contents of *IRL–Dmh* Mss 45–50 becoming part of the Mercer's Collection.

Mercer's Printed Music

The Mercer's printed sources (*IRL–Dmh* Mss 51–57) reveal a number of trends in the transmission of music to Dublin and its circulation within the city. Surviving lists of subscribers, present in Mercer's copies of Barsanti's *Concerti Grossi in seven parts Op. 3* and Festing's *Sonatas in three parts Op. 6*, show how Dublin musical societies and

²⁶ Bartlett and Bruce: *Boyce Tercentenary*, pp. 26–7.

²⁷ Boydell, *Calendar*, pp.132, 144; *Dublin Journal* 10–13 Nov. 1750

²⁸ Deutsch, *Documentary Biography*, p. 271

Dublin residents subscribed to works published in both London and Edinburgh. Mercer's is not included among the list of subscribers; however, names included indicate that the hospital must have acquired some, if not all, of its printed music indirectly through subscriptions made by musical societies and, or, various individuals.

Since the format of the Mercer's benefit concerts consisted of a church service and charity sermon at which music was performed, the presence of printed instrumental works within the Mercer's Collection is a little unexpected. When was this music performed? There is no evidence to suggest that concerts of instrumental music were organised by the hospital. It seems most likely that the music contained in the Mercer's printed collection was acquired through the hospital's association with the Philharmonic Society. A large number of the surviving printed parts bear the stamp of the Philharmonic Society and an entry in the hospital minutes records that in November 1748 the hospital governor, Dean Owen, paid twenty-five pounds for music belonging to the society:

*"Dean Owen paid to the Treasurer twenty-five pounds for musick belonging to the late Philharmonic society and now sold to the musical society at Mr Neils [sic] Room in Fishamble Street".*³⁰

It is possible that this sale included the contents of Mss IRL-Dmh 45-50; the sale precedes the date of the first recorded Mercer's performance of Corelli's concerto.

A word-book from 1742 underlines the close relationship between Mercer's and the Philharmonic Society, indicating that manuscript and printed parts were probably shared between the two organisations. Music from the core repertoire (IRL-Dmh Mss 1-44) is included in the wordbook issued to accompany performances by the Philharmonic Society; the title on the word-book reads:

*"Te Deum, Jubilate, Anthems, Odes, Oratorios and Serenatas
As they are performed by the Philharmonic Society in Dublin
For the Improvement of Church Musick and the Further Support of*

²⁹ Boydell: *Calendar*, pp. 86–171, 268.

The contents of the Philharmonic word-book include the text for Handel's 'Utrecht' music HWV 278–9, the four coronation anthems HWV 258–61, the Chapel Royal and Cannons versions of *I will magnify thee*, HWV 250a and HWV 250b, and the Chapel Royal version of *Let God arise* HWV 256b.

Printed works which do not possess the stamp of the Philharmonic Society include parts for Avison's concerti and Handel's overtures. These works may have been acquired from another musical organisation or from an individual.

In conclusion, the Mercer's Hospital Music Collection is one of the most significant collections of manuscript and printed music extant in Ireland and it is possibly the largest surviving Irish collection of eighteenth-century music apart from those which survive in the collections of St Patrick's and Christ Church Cathedrals, Dublin.³² The Mercer's collection adds to our knowledge of eighteenth-century Dublin repertoire, highlighting the performance of sacred works outside the two Dublin cathedrals. The identification of the relationship between the Mercer's Collection and other collections extant in both Ireland and Britain reveals its significance within the wider context of eighteenth-century manuscript sources. The relationship between Mercer's and the Philharmonic Society illustrates the circulation of music, both manuscript and printed, within eighteenth-century Dublin. The complete contents of the Mercer's Hospital Music Collection have been catalogued by the author of this article and are included in the RISM UK online database. It is planned to transfer all Mercer's RISM files to the Irish website in the near future.³³

³⁰ MHMB 1736–72, p. 181; MHMB 1738–50, p. 153. The quote suggests that the Philharmonic Society ceased to exist. If the parts were no longer needed by the society this could account for the sale of music to Mercer's.

³¹ *IRL–Dtc* 109.u.151 Department of Early Printed Books.

³² The surviving music collections belonging to St Patrick's and Christ Church Cathedrals are housed at the Representative Church Body Library, Braemor Park, Churchtown, Dublin. See catalogue *IRL–Drcb*.

³³ <http://www.rism.org.uk> and <http://www.rism-ie.org>

Abstract

The Mercer's Hospital Music Collection is one of the most significant eighteenth-century music collections surviving in Ireland and its examination reveals important information about musical life and performance practice in eighteenth-century Dublin. This article aims to provide its readers with an overview of the contents of the collection and its significance within the wider context of extant sources for works by Handel, Greene and Boyce.

Triona O'Hanlon was recently awarded a PhD in Musicology from the Conservatory of Music and Drama at the Dublin Institute of Technology. Her thesis entitled "Music for Mercer's: The Mercer's Hospital Music Collection and Charity Music in Eighteenth-Century Dublin" was one of the first major projects undertaken in collaboration with RISM Ireland since the formation of the Irish RISM Committee.